

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
WORK SESSION HELD ON  
TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Executive Conference Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Frank Antenori, Chairman; Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman; Kathleen L. Gomez, Supervisor

Staff Present: Sharon Gilman, Interim County Administrator  
Joe Casey, Interim Deputy County Administrator  
Paul Correa, Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney  
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Phil Bourdon, Project Manager  
Tom Alinen, Chief of Staff  
Larry Smith, Architect, DLR Group  
Karen Chinn, Chinn Planning  
Jacob Ruiz, Architect, DLR Group  
Gary Retel, Architect, DLR Group  
Kenneth Bradshaw, Commander

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION**

***ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION***

**Board of Supervisors**

1. Presentation and discussion by Chinn Planning Inc. on the Cochise County Jail Planning Study.

Ms. Chinn, Chinn Planning, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Chinn presented an overview of a planning study focused on the entire criminal justice system. She stated the goal is to assess future jail capacity needs while also evaluating potential space requirements for a court and Sheriff's Office. She highlighted various factors influencing the jail population, including crime trends, socioeconomic conditions, and available rehabilitation resources. Her study included data analysis on law enforcement, judicial processes, probation, and community services to develop projections for future jail needs.

Ms. Chinn presented data on population growth, crime trends, and court activity in Cochise County. She stated the population is expected to grow slightly, with Sierra Vista and unincorporated areas making up most of the county. She stated that while crime and arrests have declined over the past few years, felony filings have increased, along with a notable rise in mental health cases. She stated drug-related

offenses are the most common criminal case filings, and probation remains the most frequent sentencing outcome, playing a significant role in the county's justice system.

Ms. Chinn reviewed felony filings and justice court data, highlighting that most filings originate from Sierra Vista and Willcox. She analyzed initial court appearances, showing a 53% increase over four years, with Sierra Vista handling the largest share. She stated the jail population trends indicate a decline in admissions but a rise in average length of stay, increasing from 16.4 to 20 days. She noted the extended stay, rather than higher crime or arrests, is driving the jail population, suggesting opportunities to reduce capacity needs through alternative supervision and social services.

Commander Bradshaw clarified that jail data includes all three county jails, as inmates are frequently moved.

Ms. Chinn stated a snapshot analysis showed that 82% of inmates were in pre-trial status, with Sierra Vista and Douglas residents making up nearly half of the population. About 35% of inmates had an unspecified residency, prompting a follow-up to determine how many are from outside the county. She stated the length of stay remains a concern, with many inmates staying over 200 days due to offenses like sex crimes, warrants, and drug-related charges. She noted the data highlighted ongoing issues with substance abuse, homelessness, and mental illness in the justice system.

Ms. Chinn stated over half of arrests are for lower-level offenses, while felony filings in Superior Court have increased by 6.5% annually, with drug-related charges making up nearly half of these cases. She stated the majority of felony sentencing result in probation, and justice court case filings have grown slightly, with Sierra Vista accounting for the highest criminal justice activity. She highlighted the significant increase in inmates requiring psychiatric care, with 20% now on psychotropic medication. She recommended co-locating criminal justice services and expanding alternatives such as electronic monitoring, diversion programs, and specialized courts. She emphasized the need for a modern jail with improved technology, dedicated mental health housing, and an early resolution court to streamline case processing.

Ms. Chinn highlighted an increase in felony court filings, with nearly half related to drug possession, DUI, and motor vehicle offenses, while sentencing largely results in probation. She stated the jail's average daily population has remained between 250–300 inmates, with admissions declining, but longer stays driving capacity needs. She stated there has been a significant rise in inmates requiring psychiatric care, with 20% on psychotropic medication. She stated that for jail expansion, consider peaking factors and classification needs, leading to a proposed 468-bed facility with support services for up to 500 inmates. She stated the design allows for phased expansion based on trends and potential reforms, such as pre-trial screening and electronic monitoring, which have reduced jail populations in other jurisdictions.

Ms. Chinn outlined the layout and supervision plan for the proposed 468-bed jail, ensuring appropriate housing for different inmate classifications, including administrative segregation, high-security, medium, and minimum custody levels. Special housing units will accommodate female inmates, juveniles waived to adult court, and those requiring medical or mental health care, with an emphasis on sight and sound separation for juveniles. She stated the facility will be designed for indirect supervision but aims to include direct supervision where staffing allows, with four main housing clusters for security and efficiency. She stated the total building space

is projected at approximately 205,000 square feet, incorporating courtrooms, intake areas, medical services, and essential operations to support inmate programs and facility maintenance.

The Board and staff discussed jail design standards, focusing on Affordable Care Act (ACA) guidelines, space requirements, and costs. Ms. Chinn emphasized that the standards dictate facility sizes, including cells, kitchen, medical, and recreation areas, aiming for efficiency while minimizing costs. The Board raised concerns about the size of administrative and public lobby spaces, prompting a discussion on how these areas support legal visits and community reentry programs. The Board and staff debated the dormitory-style housing, but Ms. Chinn noted jails are moving away from open dorms due to safety and management challenges. The Board and staff touched on potential future cost reductions through modular designs and maximizing correctional staff efficiency. The Board will continue refining the design and accreditation approach while considering costs and operational impacts.

Mr. Retel provided a high-level review of site selection for a new jail, considering factors like utilities, topography, land ownership, and access to judicial functions. He stated several potential sites, including locations in Benson, Tombstone, Sierra Vista, Douglas, and Bisbee, were evaluated based on these criteria. He provided different site layouts, with considerations for future courthouse and sheriff's office expansion, as well as operational efficiency in inmate transport. He noted a scorecard will be used to assess site viability, with final architectural designs to be developed once the program details are finalized.

Phil Bourdon emphasized that this is a planning study and outlined the process for acquiring services for design and construction, which follows state law. He mentioned that the county has gone through procurement for an owner's representative firm to help manage the project. He stated the next steps involve selecting consultants and determining site ownership, as some locations are privately owned. He noted the board will decide on the site, and as the design phase progresses, costs and square footage will be refined to ensure the project remains within budget.

The Board and staff discussed site selection for the new jail, and raised concerns about utility costs, transportation logistics, and the economic impact on different areas of the county. Mr. Bourdon stated the next step involves concluding the study, considering an owner's representative firm, and establishing a clear timeline for acquisition, design, and construction.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 2:28 p.m.

APPROVED:

---

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

---

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board